MARVEL

2

TIERI
FLAVIANO
BLEE

ABSOLUTE CARNAGE

LETHAL PROTECTORS

WHILE INVESTIGATING DISINTERRED GRAVES IN DOVERTON, COLORADO—A TOWN ONCE TAKEN OVER BY THE SYMBIOTIC SERIAL KILLER NAMED CARNAGE—JOHN JAMESON BECAME INFECTED BY CARNAGE.

JOHN'S ONETIME PARTNER MISTY KNIGHT WAS HELD CAPTIVE BY CARNAGE AND HIS CREW. THEIR INTENT? FEED MISTY TO THE RESURRECTED DEMOGOBLIN, WHO IS IN THE BODY OF CARNAGE'S LOVER, SHRIEK!

MISTY MAY HAVE USED HER BIONIC ARM TO ESCAPE...BUT SHE'S STILL TRAPPED IN THE SEWERS WITH A HORDE OF CARNAGE DOPPELGANGERS!

ABSOLUTE CARNAGE

LETHAL PROTECTORS

WARNING: THE EVENTS OF THIS STORY TAKE PLACE *AFTER* **ABSOLUTE CARNAGE #1** & **#2.** IF YOU HAVEN'T READ THEM YET, PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK!

FRANK TIERI WRITER

FLAVIANO ARTIST

FEDERICO BLEE COLOR ARTIST

VC's JOE CARAMAGNA LETTERER

IBAN COELLO & JASON KEITH COVER ARTISTS

MICO SUAYAN & BRIAN REBER [CODEX]; GREG SMALLWOOD [CONNECTING]
VARIANT COVER ARTISTS

ADAM DEL RE
LOGO DESIGN

DANNY KHAZEM
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS
EDITOR

NICK LOWE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

C.B. CEBULSKI
EDITOR IN CHIEF

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

DAN BUCKLEY
PRESIDENT

ALAN FINE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

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I WILL ADMIT...

RRRR...

...OUR LORD KNULL CAN BE A DEMANDING GOD.

RUUURR...

HE DEMANDS LOYALTY.

HE DEMANDS OBEDIENCE.

RRAAR...

AND MOST OF ALL, BECAUSE LET'S BE HONEST... WHAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THE OTHER THINGS IF YOU DON'T HAVE THIS LAST ONE...

RARRRRRRR...

RRAAAAAARH!

...HE DEMANDS COMPETENCE.

FORGIVENESS, LORD CARNAGE. I PROMISE I WILL DO BETTER AT MEETING OUR GOD'S DEMANDS.

HA! DO I LOOK LIKE THE FORGIVING TYPE TO YOU, JAMESON?

PSYCHOTIC TYPE, YEAH, WELL...*DUH.*

BUT MOSTLY I'M A **RESULTS** TYPE.

AND YOU AIN'T BEEN PRODUCIN' THE KINDA RESULTS WE HERE IN MANAGEMENT LIKE TO SEE, BOY!

THIS MISTY KNIGHT BUSINESS HAS BEEN A MESS EVER SINCE THE JUMP.

YEAH, YOU CAPTURED HER WHEN SHE WAS SENT IN TO INVESTIGATE DOVERTON...*

BUT THEN, EVEN THOUGH I'M SUCH A GREAT GUY AND ALLOWED YOU THE PRIVILEGE TO PROVE YOUR DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE BY HAVING HER SACRIFICED...

WELL...WE ALL KNOW HOW THAT TURNED OUT.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: CHECK OUT **WEB OF VENOM: CULT OF CARNAGE** FOR THE FULL STORY! --EDITOR

AND NOW SHE'S OUT THERE RUNNING AROUND IN THE SEWERS DOING KNULL KNOWS WHAT.

SOUNDS LIKE WE NEED SOME *NEW* BLOOD TO TAKE CARE OF THIS.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT A FAN I AM OF *BLOOD.*

BRING ME BACK SOME OF MISTY'S, WILL YA, MY LITTLE DEMAGOBLIN?

IF THERE'S ANY LEFT.

MAN, I *LOVE* THAT GIRL...

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...DEMON.

WHATEVER.

WHATEVER, CARNAGE? HEY, I'M ALL ABOUT WHATEVER MYSELF THESE DAYS.

AS IN WHATEVER THE HELL I'VE HAD TO DO TO SURVIVE DOWN HERE.

WHATEVER I'VE HAD TO DO TO KEEP MYSELF ***HIDDEN***. TO STAY AHEAD OF THE ***DOPPELGANGERS***.

AND OF COURSE, THE WHATEVER I AIN'T QUITE FIGURED OUT YET...

WHATEVER THE HELL IT'S GONNA TAKE TO GET ME OUTTA HERE.

SCRUNKUNCH!

SCRUUUUNCH!

SCRUUUUNCH!

SCRUUUUNCH!

THAT'S... THAT'S A...

MY GOD.

KRAK!

KRAK!

SICK SONS OF #%$&.

BOY, THESE #$%& SURE DO LEAVE A TRAIL OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION WHEREVER THEY GO.

BUT WHAT IF YOU WERE TO FOLLOW THIS ONE, MISTY? WILL DEATH AND DESTRUCTION...

...LEAD YOU TO SALVATION?

NOT FOR THESE POOR GUYS, UNFORTUNATELY. CON ED WORKERS, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT...JUST DOING THEIR JOBS AND GOT CAUGHT UP IN THIS MADNESS.

BUT HOPEFULLY ONE OF THEM HAS...

SALVATION!

BEEP! BAP! BOOP!

GOD, THIS IS YOUR SERVANT MERCEDES KNIGHT. I KNOW WE DON'T TALK AS OFTEN AS WE SHOULD. BUT EVEN SO...I THINK I'VE LED A PRETTY GOOD LIFE, YA KNOW?

AND I HAVEN'T REALLY ASKED FOR MUCH FOR LEADING A GOOD LIFE.

BUT I'M ASKING FOR SOMETHING ***NOW.***

"I'M ASKING FOR A SIGNAL."

COME ON, LET'S SEE WHAT YA GOT. I SAY YOU GOT NOTHIN'.

I'LL SHOW YOU NOTHIN'!

STRIKE!

SWOOSH!

GEE... NOT TOO BAD FOR NOTHIN', HUH?

SEWER

MILLION BUCKS SAYS YOU CAN'T DO THAT AGAIN.

OH YEAH? BETTER GET READY TO SWIPE YOUR MOM'S BANK INFO, THEN, 'CAUSE--

WHAT THE--

THAT'S THE BIGGEST **SEWER RAT** I'VE EVER SEEN.

TAP TAP

EXCUSE ME.

STAN'S SOAPBOX · MAY 1969

STAN'S SOAPBOX

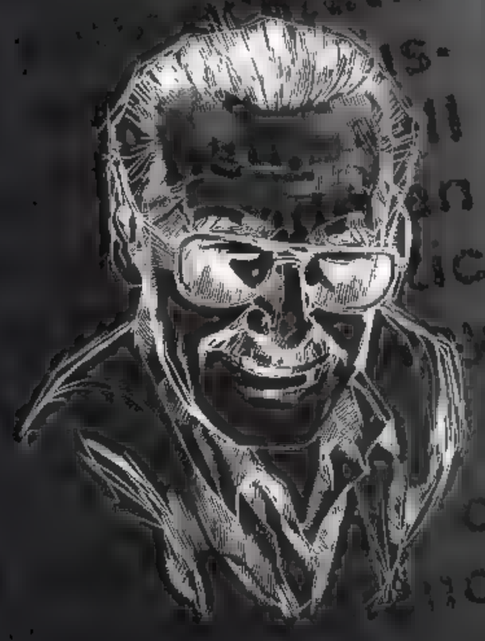
For many years we've been trying, in our own bumbling way, to illustrate that love is a far greater force, a far greater power than hate. Now we don't mean you're expected to go around like a pirouetting Pollyanna, tossing posies at everyone who passes by, but we do want to make a point. Let's consider three men: Buddha, Christ, and Moses . . . men of peace, whose thoughts and deeds have influenced countless millions throughout the ages — and whose presence still is felt in every corner of the earth. Buddha, Christ, and Moses . . . men of good will, men of tolerance, and especially men of love. Now, consider the practitioners of hate who have sullied the pages of history. Who still venerates their words? Where is homage still paid to their memory? What banners still are raised to their cause? The power of love — and the power of hate. Which is most truly enduring? When you tend to despair . . . let the answer sustain you.

Excelsior!

Smiley

GRAINGER, North Carolina . . . our pal SAL BUSCEMA, Virginia; while Jaunty J. STERANKO and Joltin' J. CRAIG both have their pads in Pennsylvania . . . Torrid TOM SUTTON, Massachusetts . . . JIM (Madman) MOONEY, Connecticut . . . and Valiant VINCE COLLETTA, Jumpin' JOHNNY SEVERIN, and Genial GENE COLAN, all nesting in New Jersey! The rest of us share the same high taxes and traffic jams in New York and Long Island — darn it! (And we never DID find out where Honest Irv holes up!)

Now, before cutting out, we've just gotta tell you about Jolly SOLLY BRODSKY. A few days ago he announced that he, stunned the children were finally



STAN LEE
FOREVER

WHAAAM!

UM...I'M THINKING THAT'S NOT A SEWER RAT.

I'M THINKING YOU'RE RIGHT, KID.

IS THIS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FLUSH A GOLDFISH DOWN THE TOILET?

SUPER HERO SELFIE! COOL!

HEY, I'M NEXT!

CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH, MR. POWER MAN?

BRRRNG!

IT'S, UH... IT'S **IRON FIST.** AND SURE YOU CAN, SWEETIE, BUT I HAVE TO ANSWER THIS FIRST.

DANNY! THANK GOD YOU PICKED UP!

MISTY? WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN? I'VE TEXTED, LEFT MESSAGES. I FIGURED YOU WERE ON SOME SORT OF MISSION BUT--

IT'S **CARNAGE,** DANNY. HE'S BACK.

CARNAGE? I'LL BE RIGHT THERE. JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE.

THE SEWERS. BUT **DON'T** COME BY YOURSELF, DANNY. GET HELP. HE--

NONSENSE, MISTY. IF YOU'RE IN DANGER, I'M COMING NOW. I--

DANNY, **LISTEN TO ME!** YOU DON'T--

AHHH!

FOOOSH!

MISTY?
MISTY?

DAMN IT.

THE SEWERS, SHE SAID.

CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE THAT THING JUST CAME OUT OF THERE. I--

SWEET CHRISTMAS.

NOPE
UM... MAYBE I'M GOING TO NEED SOME HELP AFTER ALL...
TUMPH!

YOU'VE CAUSED ME A LOT OF **GRIEF,** MISTY.

I THINK IT'S TIME I RETURNED THE FAVOR. MAYBE I'LL START WITH THAT **OTHER** ARM OF YOURS...

EASY, BOY. EASY.

SAVE SOME FOR ME!

FIRESTAR.

CLOAK AND DAGGER.

MORBIUS.

THANKS FOR ANSWERING MY CALL.

HEY, MISTY KNIGHT NEEDS HELP, PEOPLE COME.

NOT EVERYONE DID, UNFORTUNATELY.

ALTHOUGH THAT'S NOT ALL THAT SURPRISING, CONSIDERING MOST PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO DEAL WITH MURDEROUS PSYCHOPATHS IF THEY DON'T HAVE TO.

IF IT'S WHO I THINK IT IS, SOMEHOW I THINK WE'LL ALL BE OKAY WITH THAT.

AND OF COURSE... WE'VE HAD TO. ALTHOUGH, COME TO THINK OF IT, I DON'T THINK WE'VE ALL ACTUALLY SEEN EACH OTHER TOGETHER LIKE THIS SINCE THE LAST TIME THAT MANIAC TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE CITY.*

INTERESTING TO HAVE THE BAND BACK TOGETHER AGAIN LIKE THIS... SO TO SPEAK.

*IN THE NOW-CLASSIC *MAXIMUM CARNAGE!* --EDITOR

YEAH, WOULD BE NICE IF WE DIDN'T HAVE TO PLAY THE SAME HORRIFYING TUNE AS BEFORE THOUGH.

CARNAGE IS SEEMINGLY MORE DANGEROUS THAN EVER, AND JUST LIKE THE LAST TIME, HE'S NOT...

...ALONE!

WE'VE GOT THIS!

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, RIGHT?

KOOM!

BANG!

BANG!

BOOM!

BANG!

AND APPARENTLY...

...THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, TOO.

SORRY I'M LATE, GUYS. HAD TO SHOOT SOMEBODY ON THE WAY OVER.

IS THAT A JOKE? I HOPE SO. YOU CAN'T EVER REALLY TELL WITH THESE DEATHLOKS. WHICH ONE IS THIS, BY THE WAY?

WHO KNOWS? I HONESTLY CAN'T KEEP TRACK ANYMORE.

I'M HENRY HAYES. MICHAEL COLLINS--THE DEATHLOK YOU FOLKS TEAMED UP WITH LAST TIME-- SENT ME.

YOU'RE ALL WELCOME FOR THE SAVE, INCIDENTALLY.

I'VE HEARD OF YOU. AND I'VE HEARD OF YOUR RATHER IMPRESSIVE BODY COUNT, AS WELL.

SO I'LL PUT THIS TO YOU PLAINLY. I DON'T LIKE DEATHLOKS. I FIND THEM TO BE RECKLESS AND DANGEROUS. AND IF YOU ENDANGER ANYONE HERE--ESPECIALLY DAGGER--

--YOU WILL EXPERIENCE WHAT MY CLOAK FEELS LIKE. AND I PROMISE YOU...

...YOU WILL NOT ENJOY IT.

AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE NOT GONNA ENJOY IF YOU DON'T GET OUT OF MY FACE... MY SIZE 12s UP YOUR SEVERELY UPTIGHT, CLOAKED--

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CRACK!

ENOUGH!

THIS IS ABOUT RESCUING MISTY AND STOPPING CARNAGE. AND JUDGING BY WHAT I'VE ALREADY SEEN OF CARNAGE'S ARMY I'M GOING TO NEED ALL OF YOU TO DO THAT.

ALL OF YOU. EVEN THE ONES WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE ACTUALLY SHOT SOMEONE ON THE WAY OVER.

FINE.

BUT I BETTER NOT GET SHOT. EVEN ACCIDENTALLY.

NO PROMISES. ESPECIALLY FOR CAPE GUY OVER THERE.

SO, OKAY, NOW THAT THAT'S SORT OF SETTLED...

HOW THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO FIND MISTY DOWN HERE?

TO BE CONTINUED...

CLETUS' CLUBHOUSE

DANNY KHAZEM
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS EDITOR **NICK LOWE** EXECUTIVE EDITOR

C.B. CEBULSKI
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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VENOM IS THE STRONGEST ONE THERE IS!!!

Hello, Venomaniacs, and welcome to another thrilling and chilling installment of Cletus' Clubhouse as ABSOLUTE CARNAGE continues to engulf the Marvel Universe!

And AT LAST! The explosive debut issue of ABSOLUTE CARNAGE is on sale—and you readers out there in Mighty Marveldom have let us know how you feel about it with ENTHUSIASM! As soon as the first issue dropped, our inbox started filling up, so let's not waste a minute and get right to it!

Dear Venom Team,

I just finished reading ABSOLUTE CARNAGE #1 and it was amazing! I saw Cletus' Clubhouse and thought, *Hmmmmmm, I should send a letter in.*

So, hi. Good job. One hundred percent amazing, and I love it so darn much.

Kaedell I.

P.S.: I'm framing mine, cuz it's beautiful.

Thank YOU for reading and for writing in, Kaedell. As dangerous and demented as Carnage may be, we love him too!

VENOM crew,

ABSOLUTE CARNAGE is gearing up to be one great creepfest. It feels like danger is right around the corner at any given time. And how creepy was that scene in the subway where he just popped out of nowhere? It just gave me a cold shiver. Am I the only one who can't stop looking at skeletal Carnage? I feel like Cletus lost some weight. I'm also interested in seeing what you're gonna do with Red Goblin. That's gonna be fun. Loving it so far, y'all. Keep it coming. You got this!

(And hey, Drawn to Comics family!)

Billy G.
Glendale, AZ

Dear VENOM office,

When I began reading comics in the '90s, Carnage played a major role in forming my love for Spider-Man and the Marvel brand as a whole.

As I got older, I drifted away from comics but still remained a fan of the genre. Now in my mid-thirties, I just recently picked up a copy of ABSOLUTE CARNAGE as my reintroduction into comic books.

Oh...my...god!

I was in love with the book from page 1. It is gorgeously written and illustrated. ABSOLUTE-ly beautiful!

I now feel the need and desire to read anything and everything related to this Venom. Hopefully that will hold me over till the next issue because waiting for it is going to be agonizing.

Awesome job, guys! I can't sing your praises enough.

J. Doyle

Thanks so much for reading, J.! It's one of my personal favorite things to hear from readers who have found their way back to comics!

Like you, I grew up reading Spider-Man comics in the '90s, and it was a real treat to bring some of my favorite characters to the fore as a part of ABSOLUTE CARNAGE [insert obligatory plug for ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: SCREAM by Cullen Bunn and Gerardo Sandoval here!].

In fact, talking recalling our favorite past symbiotic supporting characters and devising ways to fold them into the story of ABSOLUTE CARNAGE has been one of the most exciting parts of building the story for everyone involved. Hoping we brought back some of your favorites too!

Here's a letter from Venomaniac Travis, who knows his Venom history maybe even better than I do!

Dear ABSOLUTE CARNAGE Crew,

I gave my comic shop the checklist to get all parts of ABSOLUTE CARNAGE. They missed the original release of WEB OF VENOM: FUNERAL PYRE, but I got it the same time ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: SEPARATION ANXIETY and ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: SCREAM were released.

After a long workweek, I sat down and read all three book back-to-back. What...a...RIDE!

First, FUNERAL PYRE was hot, hot, hot. It was great to see what Andi was up to. Is everyone in her family super nice? Her dad, her aunt... Don't get me wrong; I loved it. Very different from the standard broken home most tortured heroes have. The return of the monsters from the D.O.A. was also great, even if it was short-lived. Can they return? They are demons, after all. Andi's battle look with the armor, goat legs and wrench (because her dad and her used a wrench fighting Jack O'Lantern during Bunn's run in VENOM issue #38 and #39) is battle-utiful. I love all the deep cuts your team is doing.

Second, SEPARATION ANXIETY is a perfect horror comic book. The return of the symbi-puppy from the end of DEADPOOL VS. CARNAGE and its attempt at family life was scary and sad at the same time. Plus, thanking Knull during saying grace at dinner was perfect. Any chance Sadie and her family can survive this National Lampoon's Grisly Family Trip?

Finally, SCREAM was my FAVORITE of the three. The return of Patricia Robertson was... I don't have the words to describe how great that was. Her battle with a corpse carrying Scream, then becoming the host, then Andi showing up. Also Patricia's jealousy toward Andi for having bonded with the clone symbiote she had back in Way's run. Again with the deep cuts, nice. Not to mention the art of Gerardo Sandoval with Cullen Bunn's writing—as great a team-up as the Ryan Stegman and Donny Cates duo.

Now the classic question section:

Okay, Travis—lay 'em on me! Ready...? GO!

Where's the Jury? If they do show up, would Carnage's experience with Michael Hall's armored team be a problem?

For now, the Jury's been disbanded, with little known about the current whereabouts or exploits of most of their membership.

Though, as we saw in the first arc of Donny and Ryan's run, Rex's warehouse was chock-full of at least SOME of the ordnance and tech the Jury used in their war against Venom and its offspring.

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I wonder if Eddie'll be able to put any of that to use, considering the events of this epic issue...

Is there a planned reference or appearance of Chthon?

THERE IS! Great continuity know-how, Travis. In WEB OF VENOM: FUNERAL PYRE, when Carnage says, "You ain't the only one who's cursed" to Andi, that's a direct reference to the Gerry Conway-penned and Mike Perkins-illustrated CARNAGE series, which culminated with Carnage using the *Darkhold* to imbue himself with dark magic and a resistance to fire and sonics unique among the symbiotes.

Are there codices in the people and heroes who were infected with the Venom virus in the NEW AVENGERS and MIGHTY AVENGERS runs?

No! The Venom Bomb, as we've been calling it at VENOM HQ, was a semisynthetic weapon biochemically engineered by Doctor Doom. WHATEVER symbiote material he used to craft his device, it was so augmented and altered by experimentation that the very core of its genetics were changed, bearing no resemblance to those of Venom.

Any Poisoned symbiotes showing up that survived the VENOMIZED event?

I mean, TECHNICALLY Carnage himself was Poisoned! So, yes!

Beyond that, I can't say too much—you'll just have to keep reading!

Dear ABSOLUTE CARNAGE crew,

First off, I'd just like to say how great this entire thing has been.

One issue into the main series and you've already cemented this as my new favorite Venom story! As a kid, the first cartoon I ever watched was Spider-Man: The Animated Series, the Venom Saga, and ever since, I have loved everything Carnage. I've made it my goal to collect every comic featuring the 616 Cletus and his symbiote.

Needless to say, I know Carnage pretty well. I've never really been scared of him. That is, until now. After I read CARNAGE BORN, VENOM UNLEASHED and CULT OF CARNAGE, I had the first nightmare I've had in two years. I just dreamt about being hunted by Carnage and having my spine ripped out.

Keep up the amazing work, guys!

Hey, [unsigned]! Man, I LOVED that arc of the Spider-Man animated series when I was a kid. That show, the PlayStation Spider-Man game and, of course, the comics of the time still form the bedrock of how I understand Spider-Man, Venom and the whole Marvel Universe.

BUT! Included among those oh-so-formative comics was ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN, and if you haven't read the Carnage saga from ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN by Brian Michael Bendis and Mark Bagley, I would URGE you to go find it! Heck, go find and read ALL of ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN!

Not only does it contain one of the best and creepiest Carnage stories ever told, it's one of the best Spider-Man stories ever!

Plus, you never know where those characters'll pop up next...

Dear ABSOLUTE CARNAGE Team,

As a big symbiote fan, I have been really looking forward to ABSOLUTE CARNAGE, and I'm happy to see some of my favorite symbiotes returning, like Scream. It's also great seeing Carnage being treated as a big threat, even if some of it is thanks to Knull.

One Question:

Spider-Gwen currently has a symbiote, but she doesn't appear to be targeted. Is it because she and her symbiote are from a different Earth?

Keep up the great work; the first issue was amazing!

Luis

Thanks so much for your letter, Luis, and before answering your question about Gwen, I just want to note one thing:

Carnage isn't being treated like a big threat because of Knull's presence in the story or the MU.

He's being treated like a big threat because he's CARNAGE!

The most bloodthirsty and reprehensible serial killer in the history of the MU—and that was BEFORE he got his symbiote!

He's communing with Knull, yes, and Knull is a force Eddie, Venom and the Marvel Universe will have to reckon with eventually (if they survive ABSOLUTE CARNAGE, that is), but make no mistake: This summer, CARNAGE rules.

As for Gwen, Ghost-Spider is already such an integral part of the Spider-Family that we discussed the possibility of bringing her into the story—especially since, as you say, she's wearing what appears to be her universe's version of a symbiote.

But like Doom's Venom Bomb, Gwen's suit is synthetic and therefore interacts with her physiology differently than a Klyntar. While we're not exactly sure what that means yet (you should check out GHOST-SPIDER if you want some clues!), we figured it ruled her out of being one of Carnage's targets.

For now.

Hey, True Believers,

I just got done reading ABSOLUTE CARNAGE #1 and a few of the tie-ins. And let me say, HOLY CRAP.

Over the past few months, I've been in quite a depression and have turned to comic books to pull me out of this rut. My first comic was Cates, beginning with VENOM, which bled into ABSOLUTE CARNAGE.

Everything is perfect.

I can hardly make it home before I'm ready to crack open the book to discover the mystery that is about to unfold before my eyes. ABSOLUTE CARNAGE is the symbiote story I never knew I needed. Out of the hundreds of symbiote stories in the Marvel-verse, for a new fresh Carnage story to unfold in such mystery, excitement and NEWNESS (is that a word?) is mind-blowing. I can't wait to see where this road ends but don't want it to ever end... Thank you, everyone, for creating such a fresh story in the world of the craziest psychopath serial killer Carnage.

Y'all are awesome,
Kyle S.

No, Kyle—Y'ALL are awesome! Thanks for reading and for the kind words.

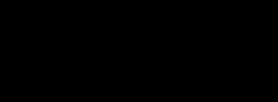
Dear ABSOLUTE CARNAGE team,

I've been collecting comics for about five years now, ever since my dad passed down his old collection to me.

I read the VENOM series last year and it was awesome, and I can't wait to see how this new storyline's going to end. Can't wait for issue #2!

Alex

Thanks for reading, Alex! It's always great to hear from readers who share their comics hobby with their family. Here's to many more years of Venom comics you and your dad can share!



That's all the space we've got for this one, folks! Remember to head to your comic shop next week—and EVERY week this summer—and tell them you want the best, and the best is CARNAGE!

#CarnageRules
Devin
@edevinlewis